THE COLLEGE BATTLEGROUNDS

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There might be a temptation for readers who are not planning to attend college to read the title of this month’s issue of Beacon Lights and think to themselves, “Well, this doesn’t apply to me, so I’ll pass on this one. Maybe next month will be more relevant.”

If that is what is going through your mind... please don’t take a pass on this edition!

Even if college isn’t in your future, the articles this month are still going to be relevant to your life because you are part of a spiritual body with many members. While not every member of the body of Christ will be enlisted to fight on each battlefield in “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12), none may sit on the sidelines watching his fellow members take a beating without any effort to help. Your fellow soldiers need your understanding and encouragement as they prepare to do battle in the college and university setting. They are called to do the same for you when you enter the battlefield of the secular workplace. Like Old Testament armorbearers (1 Sam. 14), we are all encouraged to equip one another for the fight and to provide steady support throughout the battle of faith.

And a battle it is!

The second half of Ephesians 6, which describes the armor of God, is not just a cute analogy. Spiritual warfare is a deadly business because we are doing battle “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world” (v.12). These enemies aren’t just looking to draw a little blood. They want your soul. They know your vulnerability as you exit the “bubble” of Christian schools and will seek to exploit it at every turn.

One of the most effective tactics these enemies will use in the college or university setting is the strategy of “divide and conquer.” If a believer can be separated from his or her fellow saints and diverted away from the primary mission of serving God, the enemies know they are likely to score a victory. Young believers are especially vulnerable in this regard because they are frequently unprepared for the devious nature of this strategy. They might expect the frontal assault of words attacking the Christian faith, which are very real and deadly. But they aren’t necessarily ready for the sneak attack that preys on their insecurity of being alone and uncertain in a new environment.

A secular university professor recently commented on the vulnerability of new college students by describing them as “teenagers who arrive on campus in search of a tribe to join and a dragon to slay.”¹ This is incredibly accurate in my experience. Students usually come to college with few true friends and a weak sense of purpose regarding their future. Oftentimes the first group of people who provide a sense of acceptance and common purpose will become a student’s “tribe” and will get to define what “dragon” is to be slain. Through this crafty strategy, students are absorbed into a community that has no interest in the God of scripture and has as its purpose the goal of thwarting that God’s will.

Be aware of this dangerous strategy, young person, and make plans to counter the attack! As a believer, you already have a tribe. It’s called the church. If you are staying at home during your college years, stay grounded in the church to which you belong. If you are moving away, make it your first priority to find a faithful, local church with which you agree in doctrine and practice and join yourself to that part of Christ’s body. Participate in the life of this tribe (worship, bible study, acts of service) and make your friends among it. This is the fellowship you will need to survive the four years of battle in which you are about to engage.

And with the help of your “tribe,” make sure your efforts are focused on slaying the “dragon” that God’s word has identified for you. This is the dragon with three heads that threatens every true believer (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 127). Learn to fight the temptations of Satan. They will come at you with the enticements of the world and play to your own sinful desires. Chief among these sinful desires is the pursuit of your own glory, which is perhaps the greatest danger to the college student. With the help of your fellow saints, learn to crucify yourself and live for your Lord. By his grace you will learn to say with John the Baptist, “he must

increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Along with the feature articles on our topic for this month, we welcome contributions from a guest writer for the monthly Devotional rubric and the new author for the Current Events rubric. As we enter the coming school year, the latter rubric will expand to include student contributions in a variety of ways. Our hope is to expand this practice to include writing from students across the Federation of Protestant Reformed Christian Schools, which serve as the central training ground for our authorship. May God bless these schools and the teachers who prepare young people for life after high school, including the college battleground.

Editorial Brendan Looyenga

GLORY OR THE CROSS?

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

Galatians 6:14

It’s not entirely a stretch to say that the Reformation began on a college campus in a debate over current events. Perhaps it might be a bit more precise to say that it started when a faculty member at the seminary associated with a Christian university proposed a debate over some of the practices in his church. To be honest, there wasn’t anything particularly striking about the college or its young professor in the minds of most people at the time. The institution was new, and the faculty member involved in this escapade was fairly inexperienced. No one really expected what was to come.

If you’re following the hints from the prior paragraph, you probably realize that I’m talking about Martin Luther. When he nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg university church in 1517, he was issuing an academic call to debate the practice of selling indulgences that was common in the medieval Roman Catholic Church. Luther’s approach may seem a bit dramatic to us, but in all reality, it was not much different than sending out an email blast or Facebook invite today. College campuses, as it turns out, have always been places where a small spark of controversy can ignite raging fires of change. While the incident in Wittenberg was the catalyst of very good change in Western society—that being a return to the biblical gospel of grace through faith alone by Christ alone—this is more often not the case. In our day the call on most college campuses is not for a return to biblical orthodoxy, but the demand that the autonomous rights of man be respected and protected as the law of the land.

Shortly after the controversy over indulgences, young brother Martin was asked by the head of his monastic order to lead a second debate in the city of Heidelberg so that he might give a fuller explanation of his doctrinal positions. The document that Luther drafted for this debate was much shorter than the more famous one nailed to the church door a year earlier. Though only twenty-eight theses in length, its contents represent an incredible leap forward in theological development. Among the various concepts he presented in seed form at Heidelberg were many that are familiar to Reformed believers, including the antithesis, total depravity, and the bondage of the will. Nestled among these gems was another diamond: the distinction between a theology of glory and the theology of the cross.

What is meant by this distinction may not be immediately obvious to most readers. A theology of glory doesn’t sound all that bad until we realize what Luther meant by this term. Remember that the culture he inhabited was almost entirely “Christian.” Other than Jews and the rare pagan, most people in Europe thought of themselves as followers of Jesus Christ. But centuries of theological drift had brought the church to the point where it was virtually indistinguishable from the world. Its system of doctrine was focused on human activity instead of God’s glory. Its leaders and institutions
were focused on building an earthly kingdom. The church was rich, and it was powerful. In pursuit of its own glory, the church was a smashing success.

The problem, however, was that very few in the church knew and followed the Christ who had given his life on the cross. Such a theology of the cross wasn’t really necessary anymore since sin was something that could be dealt with rather easily. With a few coins to make the collection coffer ring, souls could spring from judgment and find their way to heaven. In such a system, the wrath of God for sin was relatively small in comparison to human works. Salvation was attainable with a little help from the saints and a nod to the Savior.

The blinding and hardening effect of a theology of glory can hardly be overstated. Luther got right to the point in his condemnation of it in the twenty-first thesis of his argument in the Heidelberg Disputation, which is worth quoting.

A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

Readers of all ages, I am sure, will appreciate the relevance of this short and striking statement to our current circumstances in Western culture. I certainly took notice when I recently stumbled across these words for the first time. What Martin Luther observed in his day is a stunningly accurate description of the culture in which we live, particularly in the context of higher education. I cannot think of a better description of what is going on across college campuses in our country, including Christian college campuses, than what Luther says here. Evil is called good. And good is called evil.

Though examples abound, perhaps the most obvious one is the change in attitude toward human sexuality. What only a generation ago would have gotten a college student into serious trouble is now tolerated, excused, and even celebrated. Nothing makes this clearer than the growing list of letters associated with human sexual identity. What started as “gay rights” in the latter half of the twentieth century gradually expanded to include a whole array of sexual behaviors, each with their own letter in the growing acronym LGBTQ+. From what I’ve read most recently, even that list may be out of date. It’s hard to keep up.

The point of this editorial, however, is not to lament the moral decay of our nation and the Western world in general. It is rather my intent to point out to young people that a line is increasingly being drawn before them in the sand of time. This is especially true on college campuses across our nation, where patience is running thin for anyone who holds to a conservative religious ethic. There are two options: a theology of glory or a theology of the cross. If Christians refuse to call sin what it actually is, we will have the world at our fingertips in all its glory. But if we do call sin what it actually is, we can expect suffering, sacrifice, and scorn. This is why the Lord reminds us, “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (Matt. 10:24). Be strong and of a good courage as you take up your cross and follow the Lord!

Ryan Kregel

THE COLLEGE-COMPROMISED CHRISTIAN

I remember it clearly even though it was six years ago. I was sitting on a bench outside a lecture hall at Grand Valley State University, waiting for my class’s turn to enter. A young man sat down next to me wearing a shirt that had the words “Covenant Christian.” I didn’t recognize him, but I figured there was a good chance that I might know his family in light of his familiar shirt. I engaged him in conversation, and we shared what families we belonged to. Turns out he was a freshman at GVSU, having recently graduated from Covenant.

Only two minutes later, another individual sat down on the other side of this young man. We ended our conversation, and the young man turned to the newcomer (his friend) and began a wholly different kind of conversation. This conversation was filled with profanity. The young man wearing the Covenant Christian shirt began spewing forth vulgarity and swear words that rivaled any modern-day rap artist. Here was a young man who with his wardrobe claimed to belong to a certain group of people who worship and hallow the name of the
living God, but with his language claimed allegiance to a dark and evil power. Here was a horrifying thing. Here was a young man who completely compromised his Christian witness.

We can dwell all day on what a terrible sight it is when something like this happens, but let’s focus on why this happens. To begin with, we can say that it wasn’t his education at Covenant that caused the young man to foul his witness. He did not learn and practice profanity under his teachers at school. On the contrary, he attended a school that shuns and punishes evil speaking. Regardless of this fact, these things still occur. Why?

When young people graduate from a Christian high school and move on to a university (often secular), their sphere of influence changes. In their high school they were surrounded by a daily Christian witness from teachers and students. When they enter the university, that sphere of daily influence changes from unabashed godliness to unabashed ungodliness. Not only is the university often not godly, but it is usually antichristian. Ungodly science professors hate the creator God of the Bible. Ungodly young people hate the holy God who requires holy living of his children, including chastity. They also hate the young person who does not speak foul language and hate even more the young person who dares to speak against such profanity.

At this point in a Christian young person’s life when the sphere of influence changes drastically, he faces the temptation to fall in line with the new people he encounters. He hears profanity from his fellow classmates and possibly new friends. Maybe it bothers him at first, but then his ears are grated enough with foul language that his conscience is hardened to it. Then it no longer bothers him. Pretty soon he also is slipping profanity into sentences here and there, even taking God’s name in vain. Eventually he sounds a lot like the young man I introduced at the beginning of this article. This sequence of events can happen with other things, including sex, drinking, drugs, acceptance of homosexual lifestyles, and denial of God as creator.

If you feel yourself being tugged in the wrong direction upon entering your university years, ask yourself two questions:

First, who are your friends? When you left high school, did you leave your godly friends behind when you met fun, new, and possibly daring friends at college? Maybe you already had some not-so-good influences from your friends in high school. Your friends should be those who encourage you to live a godly lifestyle. Do your friends attempt to restrain you from evil, or do they attempt to restrain you from doing good?

Second, who are you trying to impress? Are you trying to impress your college science professor by not being that six-day-creationist kid who doesn’t believe in evolution? Or are you trying to please God by being a clear witness of the truth of creation that he gave us in scripture? Are you trying to fit in with your new “friends” who like to drink a lot of beer and have sex? Or are you leading a godly lifestyle of purity and discipline? Are you in a continual competition with your ungodly classmates to see who can fit the most ugly, four-letter words into one sentence? Or do you show by your speech that you are a child of God?

After reading all of this, maybe you are now afraid of attending a secular university. Don’t be. You are not alone. There is one who is watching over you. He is the one, true, and living God who claims you as his own and will not allow you to be harmed. You are also not alone because there are allies present at the university. You are not the only Christian walking in the midst of unbelievers. There are others. Seek them out so that you can encourage each other. In my experience, you don’t need to look hard to see that someone is a fellow believer, because he or she will show it in a holy lifestyle and undefiled speech. However, guard yourself. You do not enter the university oblivious to the dangers that are around you. Rather, you guard yourself by living a godly life, beginning with walking in the green pastures of God’s word. Every morning before you go to class, you put on the armor of God to withstand the onslaught of the devil that you are about to face. You also guard yourself by surrounding yourself with friends and family members who will help keep you accountable. The temptation in the college years is to strike out on your own, even cutting off family and friends. When you distance yourself from godly influences, you leave yourself wide open and vulnerable. Remember, you are not your own. You belong to someone else. He has placed people in your life to help you lead a godly lifestyle. You represent that someone—Jesus Christ—and not with just the words on your shirt.

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The Bible is the word of God. It is not enough to say that part of the Bible is the word of God or that somewhere in the Bible the word of God can be found. From Genesis to Revelation, every line of holy scripture is the word of God. Therefore, scripture is authoritative for the child of God over all aspects of his or her faith and life. As such, every Christian ought to hold the Bible dear. It ought to be held in high esteem above all else. Meditate on Psalm 119:97. That is the proper attitude one must have toward the word of God.

That is not the attitude most people have toward God’s word today. On the contrary, the Bible is openly disparaged as outdated and out of touch with reality. Even many of those who call themselves Christian today trample critically upon the Bible. This wrong attitude takes various forms. Men corrupt the clear teaching of God’s word to fit their heresies. Men call the clear commands of God in scripture bigoted and hateful. But perhaps the most common way God’s word is dishonored and trampled underfoot is when men and women elevate their learning above God and conclude that scripture contains a variety of errors. There is no place where this is more prevalent than in the college and university classroom. Therefore, everyone, but especially those in college, must take note of the absolute importance of maintaining the inerrancy of the Bible from beginning to end. All of faith and life depend upon it.

Both the importance of and the conflict regarding the Bible’s inerrancy can be demonstrated by turning to the first three chapters of holy scripture. Whether secular or Christian, nearly every college classroom teaches some wrong view on the condition of humanity described by these texts. At the secular college, the consensus seems to be that humans are responsible for many evils in this world, but that we can solve any problem if we all come together and learn from past errors. For example, I took a class on the Holocaust, one of the most outstanding examples of the utter hatred that fallen people have toward one another. One of the foundational purposes provided for studying the Holocaust was that if humanity learned about it, studied it in detail, and worked together, we could prevent something like this from ever happening again. In this view, humanity isn’t inherently bad, and there is no need for Christ as the only way out of our misery.

What the Christian colleges teach is perhaps not so bold, but it is equally dangerous. Here many will speak and teach of the need for Christ. Yet, like in the secular college classroom, the common consensus is that man, by nature, is not totally depraved. Such colleges teach that there is much that we can do to “save” ourselves apart from the gospel of Christ. Therefore, it is taught that donating your time in the community, working at a homeless shelter, or going on a mission trip can help improve society and make the world ready to accept Christ. Though all these activities are lawful things that can be very beneficial for the believer and those whom she serves, they are not a means to salvation.

These false teachings are not compatible with the plain instruction of God’s word in Genesis 2:17, “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they became spiritually dead—totally depraved. The New Testament provides an inspired commentary on this in Romans 5:12: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” and 1 Corinthians 15:22: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” The point is very clear. Humankind cannot help themselves. Apart from Christ, all are dead in sin—not greatly affected by sin or mortally wounded in sin, but dead in sin. The only way this reality could be ignored is by denying the historicity of Genesis 3. If the fall can be relegated to myth, then total depravity and the absolute need for Christ are lost entirely. But because scripture is the word of God in its entirety and is without any error, this false doctrine of depravity cannot stand. And we may be assured that even though we are opposed to all the wisdom of the...
world, we can stand firmly on the word of God, for “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Cor. 1:25).

A confession of scripture’s inerrancy also conflicts with another common theme on almost every college and university campus, which is the disfigurement of gender roles and sexual relationships. The factual accuracy of God’s creation of man and woman found in Genesis 1 and 2 stands directly opposed to this false teaching. The nature of marriage ordained by God in these texts is clear: one man and one woman for life, with man as the head of his wife. This understanding of Genesis is also indicated by New Testament texts such as 1 Timothy 2, which demands that the biblical record of God’s creating man and woman be historically accurate.

The destruction of biblical gender roles serves as the most recent example of a cultural push that is openly condemned by scripture. Sadly, the cultural push for this change is present not only in the world’s institutions but also in institutions that claim to be biblically grounded. How can this be?

Isn’t scripture clear? The answer is yes, but clarity is lost when errors are introduced into scripture. If the accuracy of Genesis 1 and 2 is undermined, then the word of God can be manipulated and ignored. Then homosexuality can no longer be called sin and gender identification becomes subjective. Then women have as much of a right to hold office in the church as men. When one sets aside the inerrancy of scripture, the Bible no longer is the sole rule for faith and life. Instead, man becomes his own ruler.

The need for maintaining scripture’s inerrancy, even in the opening chapters of the Bible, extends beyond just the demand to worship God as the creator. The historical accuracy of the entire Bible stands behind every article of our Christian faith. There can be no word of scripture that is in doubt. The world and the apostatizing church will never stop undermining the Bible as the foundation of Christianity. Therefore, all of us, but especially those who live day to day in the college and university classroom, must pray for faith to maintain the confession that the word of God is an inerrant rule for all that we believe and do.

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Aaron Van Dyke

THE DANGERS AND BENEFITS OF A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

You can thank God that when you graduate from high school, you have the option of attending a college or university. When God’s people spend a few years delving deeply into mathematics, the sciences, history, or the languages, God’s works are magnified, and he is glorified. Higher education is a good gift. Here on earth, however, spiritual dangers attend every good gift and legitimate activity. Of course, that’s true of studying at college as well.

Spiritual dangers threaten when we study at secular universities. There the believing student sits in classrooms where God’s existence is ignored, questioned, or ridiculed. He walks a campus where moral relativism is the name of the game. He works on school projects alongside peers who reserve their weekends for open debauchery. None of this comes as a surprise.

But spiritual dangers also threaten when we study at Christian universities. This article will highlight two categories of danger that the believing student will encounter in this setting. The article will also touch upon two great spiritual benefits that an education at a Christian university offers.

The first category of spiritual danger that you will face at a Christian university is the danger of over-embracing the school’s mission and worldview. Every Christian university is different, of course, but today many Christian universities have been overrun by postmillennialism, the higher criticism of scripture, and a brand of critical theory that takes

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a Christian veneer. If you do not guard against the danger of over-embracing this sort of college atmosphere, you may be warmed up to these ideas by Bible classes that gently undermine the authority of scripture: “It’s not meant to be a science textbook, after all…” and by social studies classes that undermine the moral credibility of your families: “Your parents’ understanding of the issues is a little simple; not as ‘nuanced’ as yours is now. And by the way, they’re full of racial biases.” The lies will play upon your pride, your ignorance, and your fear. Be on guard against them.

You must be on guard against embracing lies, but you must also be on guard against embracing spiritually detrimental friendships. You will sit in classes with people who have the same interests and career aspirations as you. Friendships will not be hard to form. Christian universities have many bright, energetic young people who are excited to serve a Jesus who does not hate or judge sin. It can be tempting to befriend such people and to justify it with something about how “PRs” aren’t the only ones saved. It can be tempting to join your newfound friends in their trampling of the antithesis. Be on guard against this. Make friends with people who will strengthen your walk with Christ, not undermine it.

To guard against embracing false teaching or spiritually detrimental friendships, read the scriptures. Read the scriptures often. One great benefit of attending a Christian university is that there are many opportunities to make yourself familiar with scripture. The Bible is often quoted to support various ideas. When this happens, make it your business to search the scriptures daily to see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). Before establishing friendships, evaluate whether your acquaintance strives for the life of holy thankfulness laid out in scripture. Pray that God will keep your heart and mind from error.

The second category of spiritual danger that you may face at a Christian university is to become cynical. Seeing errors at your university, you may be tempted to dismiss even the good and profitable things that the school has to offer. One of those good things is relationships with other Bible-believing Christians. When you look around at all your classmates who are deceived, the danger is to become discouraged. With Elijah, you may despair and cry, “Everyone’s a false Christian…and I, even I only, am left!” Your eyes well up with despondent tears as you look across the campus lawn, blinded to your fellow believers who do exist with you on campus. Be on guard against this. If you too hastily condemn everyone else, so that you’re the only believer left standing in your mind, then you’ll cut yourself off from the possibility of being encouraged by and learning from your fellow believers on campus. You’ll also inadvertently relieve yourself of your duty to be an encouragement to them.

The cure for cynicism is to seek out fellow members of Christ’s body on campus. Reread Belgic Confession article 29. The article identifies the marks of true Christians. Armed with this knowledge, keep your eyes open for those in your classes with whom you can enjoy good fellowship and profitable discussion. If there are theologically conservative professors at your school, be receptive to the help and encouragement that they will be happy to give to you. One of the greatest joys and benefits of a Christian college is finding a group of believers who “have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal” (Rom. 11:4) and are willing to study the scriptures with you and pray for you. Such friends in the Lord are a true blessing.

You will face spiritual dangers wherever God calls you after high school. If you are considering attending a Christian university, begin to think about what you will face there. Prepare for the dangers. But think about the benefits too and enjoy the assurance of 1 Corinthians 10:13: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

The following is a list of resources that I found helpful during my time at a Christian university. I’d encourage young people who are thinking about attending a Christian university (and their parents) to read some or all of the following books and articles as they prepare for college:


Prof. David Engelsma, Christianizing the World: Reformed Calling or Ecclesiastical Suicide? (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2016).

A young man joined the Marine Corps pre-Korean War, gung-ho in all his training. His loyalty and patriotism were noted by his sergeant, who then made him a platoon leader. During a highly celebrated battle, his regiment was inserted in the line at a crucial point. Mortar shells exploded around him, gunfire ricocheted off rocks and dirt, as the enemy sought to overwhelm them with their sheer numbers. Being in real combat for the first time and seeing that the enemy intended to kill him, he cried out to his sergeant, “Sarge, they are shooting at me!” His sergeant replied in a calm voice, “That’s okay, son. They may do that.”

When you enter the world as a young Christian, whether for work or school, you will be challenged by people who live, believe, and teach things that are not in accordance with God’s word. Even though you’ve prepared for these interactions through school, catechism, devotions, and church, you may still fear this direct confrontation as did the soldier from the story. As natural as the instinct is to run away, you must stand and fight. Specifically, you must fight in a manner that is “gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” This calling comes directly from 2 Timothy 2:24–25, in Paul’s letter to Timothy and the church. As those around you oppose God, you, the young Christian warrior, must teach meekly and patiently, witness through both actions and words, and trust God to use you in your interactions.

The first calling for you is to be meek when talking to someone with whom you disagree. Meekness does not mean being quiet, not saying anything. Being meek first controls your attitude, and as a result, directs your actions. Remembering that you are no better than anyone else, you address others as patiently as God has been patient with you. Human nature causes you to be aggressive and to yell when there is disagreement. You may even be tempted to belittle someone because they don’t believe in the truth. This is not meekness nor patience.

To illustrate, looking at what this calling doesn’t mean will be helpful. If a professor teaches that God saves everyone, the wrong response is calling them “dumb” or yelling at them in class. No debate will go anywhere when there is name calling or disrespectful attitudes toward the other party, especially in such a public place as a classroom. Instead, you, as a student, should inquire about why the professor might believe this, taking the time to learn more about their upbringing and beliefs. Patiently listening to them fosters a sense of trust. You will have then set the precedent for the rest of the discussion, which is best had outside of the classroom.

This model comes from Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–26). Rather than immediately considering her to be unworthy of his time, Jesus lovingly, patiently, and meekly listened to her as she told him who she was and what she was looking for; only after that did he address her and her sin. The words, “I can’t even believe you’d be a Samaritan,” or, “I’m better than you because I am a Jew,” do not leave Jesus’ lips, like they might leave ours to our professor or classmate. Regardless of what someone might believe, patiently listen, just as Jesus did.

The second calling as a young Christian engaging with someone who doesn’t believe the truth of God’s word is to teach. After you’ve listened to what they have to say, share with them the truth of the word of God, but do it as you’d feed a child who needs “milk” (Heb. 5:12–14). Teach concepts rather than big words that name those concepts. For someone who hasn’t had the same upbringing as you, a large

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1 Story told by Rev. Haak from the archives of Joel Sugg, a member of the Houston PRC.
word like “predestination” might be intimidating; learning first what “predestination” means is much more manageable. Feed them with milk, rather than meat like you’re used to getting. If the Lord causes the conversation to continue past the initial interaction, you may begin to share with them the “meat [that] belongeth to them that are of full age” (v. 14). Because the backgrounds of those you encounter are all different, you must teach with patience, bringing milk and not meat.

You should teach not only with your words, but also with your actions. If your life doesn’t reflect what you’ve just taught someone, then the lesson has been worthless. You must be willing to sacrifice your grade for the sake of truth. Paul writes, “Be not conformed to this world...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). If you conform to what your professor wants you to write (not truth), you will pass the class academically but not spiritually. By writing the truth, you may not pass the class, but you will commit to the calling to be a “good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). Your professor may even see your commitment to your faith and the truth of God and become convicted through your witness.

The third and final calling for you is to trust in the power of the Lord to use your words and actions to soften the hearts of those around you. As you discuss the truths in the Bible with someone, don’t be disheartened if they leave the conversation not having submitted to God’s word. This doesn’t mean you have failed in your calling to witness or to teach. Instead, by walking away, you confess God’s power to change the heart. Your words do not bring the Holy Spirit into their hearts, nor do they “save” someone. Salvation is only by the power of God and his grace toward sinners. If you obey your calling to teach patiently, the Lord may breathe new life into those with whom you talked. How merciful is he to use sinners such as his children to bring life into a hardened heart!

Coming across someone who doesn’t believe the same thing as you is inevitable. The initial response might be dread, and you may wonder, “How can I talk with them? How will I know what to say? Am I strong enough in my faith?” You should not be worried about this because your Father in heaven “shall supply all your need according to his riches” (Phil. 4:19). Rather than dread, you should look forward to talking with people who disagree with you. See these discussions as opportunities to share the gospel of God’s grace while strengthening your faith. As you step into your college classrooms, remember the words of 2 Timothy 2 so that instead of running away and shouting, “Why are they shooting at me?” you can run toward them and shout, “I’m ready, Lord!”

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Parents and young people, we are engaged in a fierce battle. I am not talking about the battle against drunkenness, laziness, or the movies and music of this world, or even about the church’s fight against false doctrine, although we war against those things. The enemy we face lurks in the colleges and universities, the news networks, radio programs, movies, and in certain churches. It dresses up in many different kinds of clothes, so you may not have noticed even if it slipped into your house through the back door.

Satan has been lying for six thousand years. The armor of the church shows the wear and tear of heavy and toilsome battle against numerous lies throughout history: the heresy of Arminius, the deception of evolutionism, the ungodly philosophies of the Enlightenment period, and on and on. Now, one of Satan’s lies is found in what is called postmodernism. As indicated by the word itself, postmodernism comes after the modern period. The modern period was largely brought on by the Enlightenment, and extended roughly to the early
to mid-1900s. The modern period concerned itself with being able to come to definite conclusions. In that sense, truth was knowable, and certain conclusions could be made about reality. Then, increasingly more and more, postmodern thought crept onto the scene. While the roots of postmodernism cannot be exactly located, much of its beginning, especially in America, sprouted out of the tumultuous 1960s. During this time, and up until our day, facts and realities of this world have been questioned. What does it mean to live in a postmodern age? It means that people—specifically what people we will get to in these articles—question the ability to come to any conclusions about reality; it questions whether truth is actually knowable; it means asking many questions without having many answers. In this first article, we consider the postmodern threat in universities.

“So,” you might ask, “why does this concern me as a parent or as a student in high school or college?” I am compelled to write this article because, just having finished university, I realize more than ever the threat that postmodernism poses in post-secondary education. Still, you ask, “so what”? This is why the matter is so serious: postmodernism, which attacks truth and the ability to know it, attempts to destroy our worldview which has for its very foundation the truth of God’s word.

Although postmodernism is a somewhat vague, mysterious force in the universities and colleges, we must not shy away from seeking to identify it so that we can know what we fight against. Let us identify some symptoms. If you are in college, or anywhere else for that matter, have you ever heard someone say, “I feel that…,” instead of “I know that…,” even on relatively clear issues? If you attend a Christian college, has your theology or religion professor questioned basic truths of Scripture, basing what he says upon the changing winds of popular opinion in the church world? If you attend a college or university, have you ever sensed the overwhelming acceptance of all kinds of ideas, behaviors, and opinions? If so - and the symptoms are certainly not limited to these—your school may be suffering from a violent bout of postmodernism.

I do not believe we live in a day yet in which professors try to stuff their agendas down students’ throats. In our day of tolerance and political correctness (cousins, or perhaps daughters of postmodernism), I do not believe the classroom is a very intimidating atmosphere, even for Christians. If you talk about your Christian faith, a response you might receive from your professor is, “That is great you have such strong faith and commitment”! The problem is, the professor, whether forced by the university or not, must say the same thing to atheists, Buddhists, New Agers, homosexuals, and Muslims. Now, this may not be every student’s experience. Maybe you have had a professor that has ridiculed you for your Christian faith. But by and large, in our day of tolerance, Christian students are still somewhat protected and able to voice their faith.

But the warm, inviting atmosphere and free acceptance of ideas in the college classroom is exactly what is so concerning. Tolerance born of the notion that truth is not really attainable is precisely why post-secondary education can be so dangerous. Worldviews are fanned out like a deck of cards. The “card-dealing” professor might acknowledge your truth, the Bible, but he also says, “consider all these other truths. You must not limit yourself. What, after all, is truth”? One author put it this way: “…in our daily experience we are in constant contact, at least at the level of knowledge, with other worldviews, lifestyles, and beliefs, and they tend to negate each other. They rub the corners off each other and make it seem highly unlikely that any one view is uniquely true.”! It can be that a Reformed believer attends college, comes into contact with a great number of other belief systems and philosophies, and the result is that the waves of postmodernism gently but steadily lift his anchor from its foundation in truth. Before long, his boat is adrift at sea, facing the terrifying waves and storms of countless worldly ideas. To this student, that which he has been taught his whole life in the home, church, and school is not so unique anymore, and it is hardly believable when placed side by side with all the other worldviews. Perhaps you have seen someone close to you change drastically after college. He or she is much more critical of the truth of God’s word, and even completely unable to define or identify truth. That is a sad case, and it can be reality. This student tolerates, if not even completely accepts, these other worldviews and ways of thinking.

I do not want to leave the impression that we should not learn about other worldviews in college. Many of our teachers would recommend that

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students receive a rigorous liberal arts education. It indeed has benefits in that it teaches young people and young adults about the workings of God throughout history, and how he works in the world of science, philosophy, language, music, and so on. College turns out critical thinkers, better writers, and life-long learners.

Do not wait until college to start becoming serious about your spiritual life—by then, really, it is too late.

But the point still stands. Young people, are you ready for college? An important question! Parents, are your children, especially high school children, if they are college bound, ready for it? I am not asking about ACT scores, GPAs, and career counseling; rather, are they spiritually ready? Young people—and this is a question I too had to ask myself—are you using your high school years wisely so that you are firmly rooted in the truth of God’s word? The high school years are so critical. The world says these years are for partying, drunkenness, constant entertainment, and foolish behavior, but we know better. Do not wait until college to start becoming serious about your spiritual life—by then, really, it is too late. You are then like an immature plant leaving the greenhouse only to face the threatening elements. If you are blessed with a Christian high school, learn and listen closely to your teachers’ wise counsel about college; grow in your understanding and appreciation for God as he reveals himself in the creation, and especially in his word. Learn your doctrine well in catechism, and strive to live it out and love it; hold the confessions close to you; take in and be nourished by the preaching. Pray that God would make you to grow in the faith and love him more.

The Bible exhorts us often to be strong and to continue in the word. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, a young pastor at the time, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”2 And again, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them.”3 Jesus highlighted the importance of truth and continuing in it in his ministry as well: “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”4 The word of God is full of such exhortations.

Attend your post-high Bible study faithfully, seeking the godly advice of your leader and peers there.

The strong Christian, entirely by God’s grace, is able to stand in the college years. A solidly rooted Christian knows where he or she stands, and never forsakes it. As you are in college, do not be afraid to ask your pastor, parents, past teachers, and friends questions about matters that bother you, especially concerning your experiences in college. Attend your post-high Bible study faithfully, seeking the godly advice of your leader and peers there. Stay connected with your Christian friends as much as possible. The years immediately following high school can be a time in which young people lose touch somewhat with their network of believers at church, so it is important to maintain that communication and fellowship, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together…”5 God uses those means to keep you strong as you increasingly move from the shelter of home, church, and school to the worldly influences of post-secondary schooling.


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2  I Timothy 4:16
3  II Timothy 3:14
4  John 8:31, 32
5  Hebrews 10:25

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BIG SHOES TO FILL

In March of 2002, my former colleague Mr. Cal Kalsbeek was approached by a member of the Standard Bearer editorial committee to write a column for their magazine aimed at evaluating current events in our world. The end result, forty-plus articles later, was not only a regular series for subscribers of the Standard Bearer to enjoy, but the creation of a textbook for the Worldviews course
he was developing for Covenant Christian High School. Mr. Kalsbeek not only provided a course for me to teach after he retired, he inspired me to evaluate the times in which we live as part of God’s perfect plan in history. Now, in 2021, I have been asked to write articles for the current events rubric of Beacon Lights. The guidelines for this rubric mirror the principles and goals Mr. Kalsbeek set forth almost two decades earlier. It is with nervousness that I accept this role, for truly I have some big shoes to fill.

Mr. Kalsbeek was a wonderful colleague, a classroom neighbor, a mentor, a godly counselor, and a friend in Christ. In my formative years as a young teacher, he modeled faithfully what it means to be a Reformed, biblical teacher in our own Christian schools. Consider carefully the meaning of those words. When I came out of college in 1998, I believed that I had been well-prepared to serve as a Christian high school teacher. I am thankful, however, that the Lord directed me to receive and accept a teaching position at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan. It was here that my colleagues, especially my classroom neighbor, instructed me in how to be a Reformed and biblical teacher, not merely a Christian who happened to teach high school students. I hope you appreciate the difference. I see now that much of my classroom etiquette and management, my work ethic, and even my devotions have been inspired by Mr. Kalsbeek. I am humbled to be given the opportunity to take up the banner and continue the march onward with the present generation of young people.

More important than the size of any man’s shoes, however, is the grand topic of understanding the times. It is grand because it is both a blessed gift and a directive from God himself. Like Mr. Kalsbeek, I will be using 1 Chronicles 12:32 as my topic verse for this rubric: “And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.” How important it was for King David to have men within the land of Israel upon whom both he and all of Israel could rely. And how much more so today does the church of Jesus Christ need young men and women, from the spiritual line of Issachar, to know what they and the church of God ought to do in these perilous times.

Using the rubric of Current Events, I intend to unfold biblical principles that we should use to properly understand the times in which we live. This topic is by nature ever-changing, but the principles in scripture that guide our understanding are not. Before we delve into the specifics of what is going on in the world around us, consider briefly with me a few principles that I hope you noticed in the above scripture passage. First and foremost, the children of Issachar were given the ability to know and understand God and God’s will. The spiritual descendants of the children of Issachar are not defined as “smart people” who read a lot of books, who watch a lot of documentaries, or who listen to the news all the time. God alone gives understanding, and he does so by his word and Spirit through the means of preaching, teaching, edifying, and instructing one another (2 Tim. 3:16–17). God gives this understanding to his people alone. The wicked do not and cannot understand God and his perfect will. Their hearts are hardened, and their eyes are dimmed so that they see only themselves and their desires.

The second principle to keep before our minds is that true understanding is not simply the accumulation of knowledge. This is very important for believers who seek to understand the times, for both the wicked and the Wicked One oftentimes know the events of history better than the saints of God do. In Ecclesiastes 2, Solomon wisely instructs his sons to avoid the foolish thinking that earthly knowledge alone is the solution for a happy and fulfilled life. Such knowledge is not only vain, but a “vexation of spirit” (v. 26). Our calling is not to have our minds satiated with the presentation of news and opinions from any singular talking head or cable program of today. Instead of simply knowing what is going on in the world, we are called to understanding. Understanding is much deeper and broader than knowledge in that it seeks to provide meaning and application of facts to our lives in the light of God’s word.

The final principle to consider based on 1 Chronicles 12:32 is that understanding implies a call to action. Mr. Kalsbeek was correct when he signed off his articles with the phrase “understand the times and live!” Understanding, guided by the Spirit through the principles of God’s word, compels us to live our lives before the face of God in wisdom. Wisdom is the actual putting into action of biblical understanding in our day-to-day walk as students, teachers, children, parents, and grandparents. The children of God who are given true understanding by their Lord are also given the inclination and ability to follow his will in time and history. Our calling is to understand the times, and then to live unto him!

This is why we all have big shoes to fill.
Habakkuk’s Lesson: Trust in Our God

Habakkuk is the eighth book of the minor prophets and is mostly written as a conversation between God and his servant Habakkuk. The book begins immediately with the prophet’s sad and angry evaluation of the state of Judah around him. He sees God’s chosen people behaving in wicked ways. He sees violence, greed, and injustice happening in the nation. He has been crying out to God asking for help, but God isn’t answering him—or so he thinks. Habakkuk wonders why God seems to be turning a blind eye and letting his chosen people get away with such terrible sins.

God graciously answers Habakkuk’s plea in chapter 1:5–11 with one of the most fearfully comforting and beautiful texts in the Bible. The second half of verse 5 points to the sovereignty of God, who says, “For I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.” God was raising up the Babylonians (Chaldeans) and would use them to take Judah into captivity as chastisement for her sins. The Babylonians were the next world power of their time, one that God describes as a bitter and hasty nation (v. 6). They were an evil people who destroyed, devoured, and took what wasn’t theirs. Their own strength was a god to them. So, while verse 5 is comforting to us, it was terrifying to Habakkuk. He didn’t understand God’s answer. God is so holy (v. 13), Habakkuk thought, how could he send this wicked nation to judge Judah? How often don’t we ask the same question! Why does it have to be this way?

Habakkuk knows God will use his counsel for judgment and correction of Judah (Hab. 1:12), but he still questions the means (the Babylonians) God is going to use. Through all this wrestling, Habakkuk is still clinging to his covenant God, whom he calls “Oh Lord, my God.” He is confused, but he trusts that this will not be the end for Judah. He has that confidence and knowledge because the promised Savior has not been born yet. He knows that the Messiah must come from Judah. Habakkuk clings to this truth. He stands on the solid Rock that is God and his promises. Habakkuk trusts God as his covenant Father, so he says in chapter 2:1 that he is going to wait for God to bring an answer to his questions. He trusts God will answer him—and God does.

God’s answer comes to Habakkuk in the form of a vision of divine judgment on the Babylonians, whom God would eventually punish through the Medes and Persians. Though it would seem to the people of Judah that this vision was slow in coming, God proclaims that it will come at the perfect time. God’s timing is always perfect! In verse 4, God tells Habakkuk to live by faith. By faith, he and the people of Judah need to patiently wait for deliverance. God

Understanding of the times is not something that I will be able to explain to you with facts, with carefully crafted prose, or with humorous anecdotes. Understanding—true understanding—will require work for both you and me. Together I hope we can walk this road using the scriptures as our guide to understand the times in which we have been called to live. Our prayer remains, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Until that time is fulfilled, give us understanding of thy footsteps, for thou alone art the One who guides, governs, and sustains all things. We naturally see the footsteps of men and nations. Guide us to see thee in, through, above, and behind all things.” Amen!

Scott is a member of Zion Protestant Reformed Church and a teacher at Covenant Christian High School.
commands Habakkuk to write down the vision along with the five woes against the sins of Babylon (Hab. 2:6–19). This is so that the elect in Judah may know and live by faith that this judgment will come. The Lord cannot lie!

In chapter 3, Habakkuk responds to God with a prayer of faith and humility that is meant to be sung. He knows Judah deserves her punishment, so he says, “In wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2). “Lord, we deserve this punishment. Forgive us because of thine own mercy, God. Remember mercy and let this punishment serve our good. Let this destroy the wicked in Judah and preserve the faithful in her.” Habakkuk goes from fear to faith over the course of just a few verses (3:16–19). He says that although bad things are coming in the form of the Babylonians, yet he will rejoice in the Lord. He trusts God, even without seeing the actual plan of salvation come to pass. Trust brings joy not in circumstances, but in Jehovah God. The joy of the Lord is Habakkuk’s strength!

Does the voice of Habakkuk in chapter 1 not sound like us today? “God, I see abortion, shootings, hatred, greed, and fighting in the world! And the church is no better! There is anger and hatred, murder with words, violence, and many other terrible sins in her. Lord, please do something! We are sinning against each other and against thee!” We wonder if the wicked will be held accountable and whether sin will be justly punished. Friends, God’s answer to Habakkuk is the same as it is to us! He is doing a work that we wouldn’t even believe if he told us (Hab. 1:5). While we wait for him to reveal his plan to us, we need to be patient. We need to trust him! We need to bring our sorrows and worries to him in prayer. Tell your soul to be still, for your heavenly Friend is leading you through thorny ways and will bring you to a joyful end.

Our God is always working. He doesn’t start working on something when we start praying about it. Rather, he is always working. He had Judah’s story and yours planned out for eternity. His plan and promise for you and for me is the same: to work everything—the good, the bad, and the downright ugly—for our good and to conform us to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:28–29). Live in this promise. Trust your Father in heaven. He loves you and he always keeps his promises. He is always with you even in the challenging trials and times of questioning in your life. Ask him for wisdom in your circumstances. Pray that God will show his plan to you. But if it is not his will to do so, pray fervently that he will uphold you and give you patience. Heavenly Father, give us the grace to trust in thee!

### Habakkuk Reading Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Study Question</th>
<th>Sing or Pray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 8</td>
<td>Habakkuk 1:1–4</td>
<td>When was the last time you felt as if God wasn’t hearing your cries?</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 9</td>
<td>Habakkuk 1:5–11</td>
<td>Do you remember a specific time when God gave you a very clear answer? Have you talked about this wonderful gift with others?</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 10</td>
<td>Habakkuk 1:12–2:1</td>
<td>Has God ever answered your prayers with a plan you would not have chosen? Have you yet seen how his answer worked out in your life?</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 11</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:2–4</td>
<td>Are you living by faith in God or faith in yourself (pride)?</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 12</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:5–8</td>
<td>Have you ever had so much greed that you stole from someone? Have you repented from that sin?</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 13</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:9–11</td>
<td>Are you more focused on wealth than you are on Christ and his church? Repent and ask God for grace to escape that sin.</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 14</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:12–14</td>
<td>Bullies make others low with their actions and words to bring themselves higher. Does this describe you?</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 15</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:15–17</td>
<td>Have you pressured others to commit sins (drugs, alcohol, sex, etc.) with you? Pray for forgiveness from God and ask those whom you pressured to forgive you as well.</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Scripture Reference</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Pray or sing Psalter #</td>
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<td>Aug. 16</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2:18–20</td>
<td>Do you put your own idols (self, money, your phone) before God? Remember God is in his holy temple, and he alone deserves the honor we give to the silent gods in our lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 17</td>
<td>Habakkuk 3:1–16</td>
<td>Do you use the history of the church of old to praise God? If not, do so! He is ever faithful!</td>
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<td>Aug. 18</td>
<td>Habakkuk 3:17–19</td>
<td>Are you able to rejoice in the Lord even in times of hardship?</td>
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<td>Aug. 19</td>
<td>Deut. 28:45–52</td>
<td>Are you serving the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart (v. 47)?</td>
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<td>Aug. 20</td>
<td>Psalm 13</td>
<td>Do you feel as though your enemies are exalting over you? Sing to the Lord with David because God deals bountifully with us!</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>Aug. 21</td>
<td>Psalm 5</td>
<td>Are you asking God daily to make his way straight before you?</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Aug. 22</td>
<td>Psalm 110</td>
<td>Do you have confidence that our great God will keep his promise to destroy the wicked?</td>
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<td>Aug. 23</td>
<td>Habakkuk 1</td>
<td>This is the second time you have read through Habakkuk 1. Is there anything you missed that you are just seeing now?</td>
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<td>Aug. 24</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2</td>
<td>Focus on verses 14 and 20. Do you live in the confidence that the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 25</td>
<td>Habakkuk 3</td>
<td>Find the passages in which Habakkuk talks about Israel's history. Do you have a history that shows God is faithful?</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 26</td>
<td>Job 13</td>
<td>Focus on verse 15. When God brings you low, do you say with Job, “Yet I will trust in Him”?</td>
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<td>Aug. 27</td>
<td>Hebrews 10:24–25</td>
<td>The OT church in Judah was failing at holding one another accountable. Are you seeking to keep fellow saints accountable? Are you gracious when they come to you?</td>
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<td>Aug. 28</td>
<td>Hebrews 11</td>
<td>Note the amount of time between the promise and the fulfillment for each of the heroes of faith. God's plans sometimes take lifetimes to be complete. Are you patient as God fulfills his promises in your life?</td>
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<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Psalm 17</td>
<td>God protects and provides for his people because he loves them. Do you trust this promise in the lowest valleys of life?</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Aug. 30</td>
<td>Romans 1</td>
<td>In verse 17, Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4. How do you show that you live by faith?</td>
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<td>Aug. 31</td>
<td>Psalm 90</td>
<td>Life is short. Are you living in God’s ways or are you wasting your life away on things of this world?</td>
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<td>Sept.  1</td>
<td>Psalm 33</td>
<td>The Babylonians trusted their own strength. Psalm 33 says that a warrior is not delivered by strength. Do you have confidence that God will avenge you without your help?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept.  2</td>
<td>Psalm 16</td>
<td>Do you look forward to everlasting life in God’s presence? Or are you like Judah and focused on this world and its pleasure?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept.  3</td>
<td>Habakkuk 1</td>
<td>God welcomes boldness and honesty when his children come to him in prayer. Are you living in the blessing and praying to him daily, even with your seemingly small questions?</td>
<td>9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept.  4</td>
<td>Habakkuk 2</td>
<td>It can be so easy to see others in the woes to the Babylonians while missing our own guilt. Do you know your own sins? Are you bringing these to the cross of Christ daily?</td>
<td>9:2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
Zara James, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Zach & Lara Kooiker—Cornerstone, IN
Jessica Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Vander Muelen—Crete, IL
Adleigh Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bradley & Cambry Butgereit—Faith, MI
Tripp Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Trent & Chelsea Wierenga—Georgetown, MI
Charlotte Christine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad & Courtney Jessup—Hudsonville, MI
Cade Jordan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan & Shantelle De Boer—Hull, IA
Gerrit James, son of Rev. Stephen & Mrs. Tori Regnerus—Lynden, WA

CONFessions of FAITH
“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Nathan Block—Byron Center, MI
Paige Block—Byron Center, MI
Gideon Chesebro—Byron Center, MI
Joey Dykstra—Byron Center, MI
Madeline Kaptein—Byron Center, MI
Lara Kooiker—Cornerstone, IN
Jared Van Baren—Crete, IL
Brianna Baas—Grandville, MI
Rhonda Kaiser—Grandville, MI
Kamryn Jessup—Hope, MI
Emily Rutgers—Hope, MI
Anthony Kooiker—Hull, IA
Alyssa Maassen—Hull, IA
Aubrey Van Briesen—Hull, IA
Claire Van Egdom—Hull, IA
Heather Van Engen—Hull, IA
Erica Van Ginkel—Hull, IA
Carson Zandstra—Hull, IA
David De Jong—Peace, IN

MARriages
“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Alec Zandstra & Miss Alyssa Murrin—Crete, IL
Mr. Carter Dykstra & Miss Josie Vander Kolk—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Michael Kaastra & Miss Brielle Kikkert—Wingham, CAN
Mr. Joel Langerak & Miss Shayna Andringa—Randolph, WI
Mr. Brice Van Overloop & Miss Olivia Pipe—Southeast, MI

Laura a member at Zion Protestant Reformed Church and a homemaker in Hudsonville, Michigan. She is temporarily filling in for our regular contributor Abby Van Solkema who plans to return to this rubric after a short break this summer.
THE LORD’S SUPPER

Every four months in the Protestant Reformed Churches, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. All the confessing members of the church—both men and women—participate by eating the bread and drinking the wine.

As children, you might not think too much about the Lord’s Supper since you haven’t made confession of faith yet. But this is an important sacrament, and by watching and listening, you can participate with your heart even if you don’t participate by eating the bread or drinking the wine.

The form that the minister reads explains that Jesus founded the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper when he celebrated the last Passover with his disciples just before he died. We eat the bread and drink the wine in the Lord’s Supper to remind us of Jesus’s death on the cross that paid for our sins. Like baptism, the Lord’s Supper speaks to us of the cleansing from our sins that is found in Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross.

We don’t eat Jesus’s body or drink His blood physically in the Lord Supper. But, in the Lord’s Supper, we are spiritually fed. It is a sacrament that the church experiences together. That is the reason it is also called communion. It unites the church together as the church as a body celebrates Christ’s sacrifice that saved his church.

The Lord’s Supper is a beautiful sacrament. As children, it is good to long for the day that you make confession of faith and can join in the Lord’s Supper with the confessing members of the church.

Find the word in the puzzle.
Words can go in any direction.
Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

blood  Jesus
body  Lord
bread  supper
communion  wine
confession

Tricia is a member of Unity Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
THROUGH MANY DANGERS

Written by P.M. Kuiper
Illustrated by Paula Barone

August 1862. Harm van Wyke and his friends leave Holland, MI to join the Union army. There they face temptations to forget God and turn from their faith, like gambling, drinking, and theft.

The friends gather regularly to sing psalms and discuss the Bible, but on occasion, they stumble and fall.

As the war progresses, the boys from Holland endure an arduous march to east Tennessee. Later they take part in General Sherman’s prolonged and bloody Atlanta campaign.

In the midst of the harsh realities of war, Harm’s faith is tried at every turn. But when his greatest conflict turns out to be spiritual, will God give him the strength to stand for what is right, even if he finds himself opposed by friends?

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